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REASONS AND AUTHORITIES

FAVORING

EDUCATIONAL UNIFICATION

UNDER THE

REGENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY

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"It would be a great mistake not to secure unification. I have believed strongly from the beginning that the Regents should be the appointing power." \* \* \*

"I am absolutely opposed to having one iota of politics in the administration of the public schools system."

— *Governor Theodore Roosevelt.*

A BRIEF OF REASONS WHY APPOINTMENT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF  
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION SHOULD BE VESTED IN THE REGENTS OF THE  
UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK.

I.

Because the Regents are a continuous body, laboring constantly in the field of public education, and dealing with the subject from a scientific point of view. Chosen primarily because of attained prominence as high-minded and capable men, their official experience gives them personally, and their board traditionally, an expert ability to judge more accurately concerning the natural and acquired fitness of candidates for so important an educational office as that of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

II.

The independent action of the Regents, free from harmful outside influences or constraints, is assured by the tenure of their office, which is for life—or rather during continued capacity and faithful attendance upon their duties; and as they receive no compensation for their services, it must be obvious that, as a rule, the position would be accepted only by men whose guiding motive is a sincere desire to promote the public welfare.

III.

The educational system of the State should be kept free from the contaminating influence of partisan politics.

That can be assured only by taking the appointment of educational administrative officers out of the field of such political contention.

As now selected, the choice of Superintendent of Public Instruction is invariably dictated by partisan political considerations, which naturally must impose hindering constraints upon his administration of the office; and (of equal ill consequence) no matter what useful expert efficiency such an official may possess or develop in office, experience has demonstrated that he will be required to retire therefrom and give place to some new and untried man when another political party comes into power.

IV.

There is no administrative position in the government of this State which affords greater opportunity for far-reaching public usefulness than that which supervises and guides the instruction of the rising generation. It should have the services of the most capable of men.

But under the present method of choosing the Superintendent of Public Instruction, men of the most desirable qualities cannot well hope to compete successfully for appointment to that office—could hardly be induced to seek the same, or to undertake its duties, knowing so well that scientific and conscientious devotion thereto would avail but little toward their retention in such official position.

V.

Their willing and vast expenditures therefor attest the deep and earnest interest of the people of this State in the cause of public education. They will be quick to approve any measure that promises to increase the efficiency of our educational agencies, and will not hesitate to commend and vote to sustain action so clearly for the welfare of the children of the State as that herein suggested.



# UNIFICATION PRIZES

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Believing that the welfare and greatest usefulness of our public schools would be best safeguarded and promoted by unifying the entire educational system of the State, under the supervision of the Regents of the University; and also believing that such would be the common conviction, if thoughtful consideration were generally given to the subject, some friends of school children (who withhold their names) have united in offering two prizes for the best and most effective articles or essays in support of such educational unification.

One prize of one hundred dollars is for such articles or essays by women, and a like prize is for similar productions by men. While it is desired that the widest and fullest expression of thought may be called forth, and no limitation as to source or locality is intended to be suggested, it is hoped that the prizes may be won by public school teachers of New York State, and they are especially urged to compete therefor.

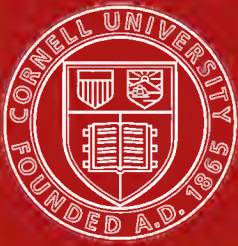
Editors of newspapers and other periodicals will confer a helpful favor by announcing the offer of these prizes, and in competition therefor they may submit several of their shorter paragraphs—to be regarded in combination as one article.

The competing papers should be received by the undersigned before October first, and if not previously published (as would be preferable) should be typewritten upon one side only of paper ten inches long and eight inches wide, with a blank binding margin at the left of one and one-half inches.

Competitors should keep copies of their papers, for it will be understood that all submitted may be retained and their contents, in whole or in part, published or otherwise used as may be found desirable and feasible in promoting improvement in the educational system of the State.

PLINY T. SEXTON.

Palmyra, N. Y., June, 1899.



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PLEASE PRESERVE FOR FUTURE REFERENCE

THE ACCOMPANYING PAMPHLET UPON

## Educational Unification.

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After duly considering the contents of the pamphlet, please let the undersigned know your views upon its subject. Also please talk with your friends and try to awaken an intelligent public opinion concerning educational unification; and give your representatives in the Legislature the benefit of your thoughts thereupon.

Editors of newspapers and periodicals will confer a helpful favor by sending to the undersigned, from time to time, marked copies of their publications containing matter of educational information and interest, and especially of their editorial comments upon educational unification.

As it will be useful to know who favor educational unification, please obtain the signatures of such persons of your acquaintance to an expression of their opinions, similar in form to and (for convenience in binding) upon paper of the size of the annexed leaf, adding further leaves as needed, and send the same to the undersigned.

Copies of the pamphlet will be mailed to such other thoughtful and influential persons as shall be recommended. In sending their addresses, please state also their occupations and official positions.

PLINY T. SEXTON,  
Palmyra, N. Y.





# In Favor of Educational Unification.

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We, the undersigned, believe that the highest usefulness of our public schools and their economical and non-partisan administration would be best promoted by unifying the educational system of the State under the responsible supervision of the Regents of the University, and as the primary, fundamental step in such unification we recommend that the Regents be charged with the duty of selecting and appointing the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

In our judgment, questions as to possible desirable changes in the administrative functions of the Superintendent, or as to the preferable constitution of the Board of Regents, should be subsequently and separately considered upon their merits.

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NAMES AND ADDRESSES.

OCCUPATIONS.

Name, .....

P. O. Address, .....

Name, .....

P. O. Address, .....

Name, .....

P. O. Address, .....

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## PREFATORY WORDS

Much of the within selected matter was evolved in the active opposition made in April, 1899, to a bill in the New York State Senate, whose especially objectionable provisions sought to remove the High Schools of the State from the care of the Regents of the University, and to commit the supervision of all public schools to a department obviously liable to partisan political control.

Selections have been made also from newspaper utterances of like tenor, made during the session of the Constitutional Convention, in 1894, and to which attention is especially directed.

Some of the not easily separable matter is, of course, ephemeral, but there is enduring value in all of the clear affirmations of reasons why educational unity is desirable and can best and most safely be accomplished by placing the entire educational system of the State under the long tested and demonstrated efficient and non-partisan supervision of the Regents of the University.

Before considering the leading questions raised by the within compilation, the reader's mind should be disabused of any bias that may have been caused by the erroneous, if not insincere accusations that the Regents of the University selfishly seek to enlarge their prerogatives and powers. The history of the action of the Board of Regents, for over a hundred years, gives unbroken testimony against the truthfulness of such imputations. But if that were not so, their unreasonableness and improbability should be self-evident, when it is considered that members of such an official Board who receive no salaries—whose time and labors are gratuitously given to the service of the public—are not likely to wish needlessly to multiply their duties, or to add to the necessary demands upon their time for any reasons other than conscientious convictions that the public welfare will be thereby helpfully promoted.

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If in any degree this pamphlet merits criticism, it should not be visited upon the Regents of the University, who have had no official relation to its compilation or output. Responsibility therefor rests solely upon an individual friend of sound educational reform.

And the compiler disclaims any purpose of making or suggesting reflections upon individuals; it is only with systems that his thoughts are concerned.

PLINY T. SEXTON.

Palmyra, N. Y.

## Unite for Unification

The obvious moral of the within compilation is the supreme importance of unifying the educational system of the State under the supervision of the Regents of the University, and the necessity for the friends of such unification uniting, with exclusive singleness of purpose, in efforts for its accomplishment.

However views may vary, as easily they sincerely may and do to some extent, as to just what powers should be vested in the Superintendent of Public Instruction, or as to the best method of constituting such a supervising State educational board as the Regents of the University of the State of New York, it cannot be doubted that by a vast majority the sincere, thoughtful friends of public education in this State earnestly believe that unification of our educational system, under the supervision of the Regents, is the fundamental educational reform chiefly to be desired.

And that being so, clearly the logic of the situation is to seek to do, first, only that one thing upon which all sincere friends of genuine and desirable unification can easily agree—that is, to lay the cornerstone of such unification by committing to the Regents of the University the selection, appointment and protection of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Having thus, by united efforts firmly fixed the indispensable foundation, upon which alone can be erected the superstructure of an enduring, satisfactory and comprehensive non-partisan State system of education, we may then, but not safely until then, freely consider, and differ if we must, concerning the details of such superstructure,—such, for instance, as suggested changes in the existing executive functions of the Superintendent, or the various propositions for altering the constitution of the Board of Regents.

Until the said foundationary unification shall be accomplished, it assuredly will be wiser to defer all dividing contentions over subordinate matters. The friends of unification should warily remember that their really weaker opponents will naturally have recourse to the old-time strategy of the weak, which ever seeks to “divide and conquer.”

DO ONE THING AT A TIME.

THE FUNDAMENTAL FIRST.

## No Reason for a New Educational Board

There were presented to the Constitutional Convention of 1894, and inventive minds at other times have suggested, various plans for the creation of a new educational board, to have power to elect the Superintendent of Public Instruction, or his analogue, and to take over the educational work of the Regents of the University. None of such plans, however, have stood the test of logical analysis.

Their suggestion is, of course, an admission that the present method of electing the Superintendent of Public Instruction needs to be changed; that his election should be committed to an educational board, and that educational unification is desirable.

But why create a new body for that purpose? Is it probable that it will be constituted of men of higher character and capacity than the existing Regents of the University? The latter may not all be the greatest of men, but they average high; and in sincerity of purpose and faithfulness in the performance of their official duties they will not be excelled. Their experience in educational work also has given them an expert capability for wise and efficient educational service such as no new body of men, however well disposed, could soon acquire. The length of service of the Regents, which averages about fifteen years, makes the changes in their membership gradual, so that new members always have the benefit of immediate association with those well informed by the traditional wisdom of a conservative Board.

In such a Board, rash and ill-considered experimenting is not probable, while steady and safe progress is made—building upon secure and well-tested foundations. Such has been the development of the secondary schools of this State, which, under the fostering care and direction of the Regents of the University, have attained to their present marked supremacy.

## Concerning the Constitution of the Board of Regents

Objections have been made, at times, to the constitution of the Board of Regents of the University:—to the method of their election; to their number; their gratuitous service and their life tenure.

While it is clearly seen that the stated objections are not sustainable, no discussion thereof will be here attempted, for, as before suggested, until fundamental educational unification shall be accomplished, its sincere friends will prefer to refrain from dividing contentions over matters of secondary importance. It is confidently believed, however, that careful investigation will convince most candid persons that the criticized features in the constitution of the Board of Regents of the University have been essential elements in the combination of influences which heretofore have secured for that public service men of such unusual, marked high character and capacity, and uniformly molded them into a harmonious public board of unequaled singleness of thought, earnestness of devotion to their beneficent work, independence of action and entire freedom from partisan political control. Upon the roster of their membership are names of many men—scholars, professional men, statesmen and men of affairs—who during the past century have been foremost in giving to and maintaining in and for the State of New York—the Empire State—its recognized leadership in all directions. They have been of those who have given justification to our State's proud motto—Excelsior!

The value of the method and features of the constitution of the Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York, is attested by more than a hundred years of conspicuous and unparalleled success, and assuredly it will be wise to move with great deliberation and caution in making any changes that possibly might break the charm of a combination which has so long and so uniformly worked with such beneficence.

If changes be admissible at all, propositions therefor should have full and independent consideration, unclouded by association with other matters, and should be accepted only upon their abstract merits;—certainly should never be demanded, or consented to, as compensation for the adoption of other, although concededly desirable, measures. Reforms should be determined upon principle; and should advance, each in its turn. And, above all, dissatisfaction with individuals can never justify iconoclastic attacks upon systems. Individuals will quickly pass away; beneficent systems should endure.



## SELECTIONS FROM NEWSPAPERS

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### Education and Politics

[BROOKLYN DAILY EAGLE, April 5, 1899]

A bill has been favorably reported to the State Senate by the committee on education, to abolish the Department of Public Instruction and to create a new department of government in its place. The head of this department, by the bill, is to be called a State Commissioner of Education. His salary is to be \$7,000 a year. He is to take office "next July 1," though we presume the date will be put forward; and he is to assume all the duties and powers of the present Superintendent of Public Instruction, as well as a lot more.

The term of the present Superintendent, Charles R. Skinner, will not end for some years yet, and why he is to be or should be superseded is not known. He has done nothing to call for it of which the public is aware. This new officer is to have entire control of the 523 high schools now under the Board of Regents, with power to conduct examinations, to issue diplomas and certificates for admission to colleges, and with right of appointment and removal at pleasure of directors of sub-departments and of other employees, including one deputy at \$6000 a year, and three others at \$5000 a year, each. \* \* \*

At present the Superintendent of Public Instruction is elected by the Legislature on joint ballot for three years. \* \* \*

There always has been a reason for unifying the educational system of the State. That should have made this department a bureau within the Board of Regents. But there is no reason why disunity in educational affairs should be continued and intensified by the creation of another department to efface this, with greater and grosser powers, at a greatly increased expense.

This would not be taking the public schools with which this department has mainly to do, out of politics; it would be taking them further into politics; and it would drag all the high schools into the same mire or pool, at the same time. Until explained, the purport of the bill seems to be bad, the tenor of it evil, and the purpose of it to provide places either for a lot of political spoilsmen or for an even worse lot of "professional educators" who are as inferior to spoilsmen as hypocrites are to highwaymen, or as incapables are to men of efficiency. No Governor should ask for the power to put the school system of this State into politics, the same as the canals and the prisons are, or can be, put under the appointive system carried into this measure. A good

Governor might make good appointments or might wish to, but a good Governor might also make fool appointments; and a bad Governor would be pretty apt to make scandalous appointments. \* \* \*

The people of this State will be likely, and likely ere long, to set going a terrible day of judgment for those whose errors or wickedness have led the politicians to realize that "the State" can "work" the schools in the future just as it has "worked" the canals in the past.

## MEETING OF THE REGENTS

### A Protest Against the Bill to Create a State Commissioner of Education

[NEW YORK SUN, April 7, 1899]

ALBANY, April 6.—At a largely attended meeting of the Regents of the University this afternoon there was a three hours' discussion of the White Educational bill, creating a new officer as Commissioner of Education at \$7000, with power to appoint and remove at pleasure one deputy at \$6000 and three more at \$5000 each, with all needed directors of departments and other officers and employees. The following resolution was adopted on roll-call by unanimous vote, except Superintendent of Public Instruction Skinner, who strongly favored the bill.

*Resolved*, That the Chancellor, the Vice-Chancellor and Regents McKelway and Sexton be authorized and instructed to prepare a statement to be presented to the Chairmen of the Committees on Education of the Senate and the Assembly, and to the Governor of the State, expressing the opposition of this Board to, and its protest against, the bill to create a State Commissioner of Education, with the powers set forth in that measure now pending in the Legislature.

Regent McKelway submitted a statement of the objections to the bill, which was referred to the committee and, with verbal changes, adopted as follows:

"The Regents protest against this bill as unnecessary, violent, revolutionary and unjust. It would wipe out the Department of Public Instruction without cause shown for its effacement; it would build upon its ruins a new department of Government, the creation of which has been asked for by none of the high schools, academies or colleges of this State; it would make that department liable to the abuses of political mismanagement and of partisan error and evils which have more than once in other fields involved our State in scandal and our people in difficulty and disgrace; it would bring, far more than at present, our system of common school instruction within the play and

purview of politics and within the methods and schemes of professional politicians; it would aggrandize powers in the Commissioner and his deputies which no educator should approve, no statesman sanction, and no friend of upright or scientific government contemplate without indignation and alarm. By needless multiplication of high-salaried officials, and by duplication of administrative machinery it would add unwarrantably to the burdens of the taxpayers.

This board particularly protests against the proposition in the bill to separate from the University the high schools, which have been its peculiar care and are the especial pride and the beloved wards of this department of the Government of the State. The high schools have in nothing deserved the proposed enforced separation of their interests and of their powers and of their privileges from the University system, in which they have rejoiced and prospered from the first. Furthermore, the high schools are the foundation upon which is built the higher work of the University as the agent of the State in the supervision of professional study. Their graduation certificates give the right to pass on to professional study and to the license which the University has been set to guard, and if those certificates are removed from the control of the University, the latter is deprived of the power to fulfil the duty laid upon it.

“The bill is a subversion of conditions under which education has been well conducted in this Commonwealth since the organization of the University in 1784. In all that time it has been the pride of the State that partisan political considerations have never dictated the action or influenced the policy of the Board of Regents. This Board, therefore, protests against this measure as one under which the absorption of its powers by evil influences and for bad ends could be easily effected.

“The Board favors unification of the educational system of the State. Pending that, it prefers the maintenance of existing conditions to those proposed, which would be far worse. The proposed measure would increase and intensify disunity; would long postpone the attainment of unification, and introduce a violent change certain to be deplorable in all its results.”

### Spoliation in the Name of Education

[BROOKLYN DAILY EAGLE, April 7, 1899]

There are two departments of the government of the State which have to do with education. One is the Board of Regents—as it is popularly called—which was created in 1784; and the perpetuity and powers of which are established by the constitution of this State. The other is

the State Department of Public Instruction, established nearly 50 years ago by statute, and intended to represent the powers and policy of the State with reference to common school education. Most of those powers are delegated, by law, to municipal and other communities, through local boards elected by the people, or appointed by elected authorities of the people. The State department is a sort of clearing house through which powers delegated by the State reach those local boards, and back to which the reports and returns of local educational bodies are sent on appeal or for record, classification and the like.

This sub-division of State powers over education into two bodies was strictly in historical order. The earlier organization and the constitutional recognition of the Board of Regents followed the rule of governments in the world, which provide, by law, for education at the top, or for the higher education, first, in the justified confidence that the people themselves, in their local bodies, will provide for elementary education in their own way. For this reason, everywhere, before common schools, universities, colleges and academies were the objects of legislative attention. The history of education has been from the top downward—like the rain, the sunshine and other benign natural forces. By and by, the community or local bodies providing for common school facilities came under the regulation of state law, so soon as the States themselves became homogeneous and government partook of the same character.

For a long while, the common school system did not extend beyond the grammar schools. There, taxation for educational purposes ended. Beyond that, academies, colleges and universities, supported by private means, carried on advanced education, the academies being fitting schools for the colleges, and the colleges either fitting schools for the universities, or the university itself a collection of colleges for the sciences and for the arts. As early as 1784, the State of New York grouped all academies, colleges and other departments of higher instruction under the title of the State University, by which all institutions of higher teaching are meant. The Board of Regents was then created for the management of that collective body, and the body, as a whole, is the most representative institution of instruction in any State in the Union.

After a while, local communities—especially municipal communities—established high schools. Those schools virtually took the place of academies. The high schools were, as the academies were, a connecting link between the two systems of instruction, and were naturally the beginning point of higher education, on which account their courses, their inspection, their reports and their examinations naturally fell, by

law, under the cognizance of the Board of Regents. As they were supported by taxation, and as they were an evolution of the system of elementary education, they bore an economic relation to the State Department of Public Instruction. But the distinction between their position in taxation and their position in education was recognized by the State itself. The State could have acted with more clearness and authority than it did, but the intention was plain to discriminate the educational side of the high schools, in the hands of the Regents, from the economic or taxation side of those schools which was left to the local authorities, just as the common schools, in the same respects, were.

This dual system of the State was either a mistake at the outset or has become one since. Unification has been made the State policy, with reference to public works, to public charities, to public prisons and to other large public interests. The argument against its application to the largest public interest—namely, education—is artificial, selfish and unscientific. Resistance to unification involves waste of funds, waste of effort, duplication of inspection, of machineries and of powers, and consequent loss by friction, confusion and division. It has been the aim of statesmen and reformers to unify the educational system of New York by concentrating all the powers of the State over education in the hands of the constitutional body, the State University, managed by the Board of Regents, who are elected for life, and by doing away with the State Department of Public Instruction, of which the head is elected by the Legislature every three years, under circumstances which make the incumbent a politician, his office a political office and the powers and patronage of that office an asset in party politics, always to the injury, and not seldom to the scandal, of education and of politics both.

Before the State Senate is a bill not to unify the educational system of the State, but to create a State Commissioner of Education, with a brood of high-salaried deputies, and with powers to plunge the entire common school system into "practical politics." The bill is a step backward. It aggravates an existing system of duality, seeks to make it permanent, and would result in worse confusion, in worse scandal and in worse evils than those which even now unhappily prevail. \* \*

Not only is the new department to have all the present powers of the department which it supersedes, but the control of the high schools is transferred to it by the bill in question. The Regents have made a vigorous protest—not at all on personal or official grounds, but on grounds of the highest interests of the community—against this bill. Their protest is published in this paper to-day. It should speak for itself to the friends of education, of good government

and of pure methods in this and in every other community in this land, wherever it is published. High School officers and teachers and all supporters of a clean and progressive moral civilization should make that protest their own. They should renew it on their own behalf to every Senator and Assemblyman and to the Governor. A measure of worse intent, worse liabilities and worse probabilities has been introduced in no Legislature in this century, for the design of it is spoliation, the nature of it is barbarism, and the effect of it would be on the most nefarious side of its most nefarious qualities. That the Legislature will pass such a bill should be difficult to believe. That a reform Governor would let it become a law should be a proposition too monstrous for belief at all.

### Educational System of the State

[SYRACUSE HERALD, April 10, 1899]

The educational system of the State of New York has been for nearly a century upon the dual plan, viz, the supervision of the interests of higher education by the Regents of the University, and of primary education by the Superintendent of common schools or the Department of Public Instruction. The Board of Regents is composed of nineteen elective members, chosen by the Legislature, and four State officers, *ex-officio* members of the Board, viz, the Governor, Lieutenant-Governor, Secretary of State and Superintendent of Public Instruction. The University is a supervisory and administrative, not a teaching institution. A Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor and Secretary are its officers. While a State department, it also is a federation of about 800 teaching institutions of higher and secondary education—universities, colleges, academies, seminaries and high schools. All institutions of higher education are members of the University, and such other libraries, museums and other institutions as may, in conformity with the ordinances of the Regents, be admitted to or be incorporated by the University. Its great work is divided into five departments, viz, administrative, examination, extension, state library and state museum. The library development has been remarkable. The work of the Regents in the past eight years has increased four-fold, and it has brought high renown to New York's educational operations.

The Department of Public Instruction is under the Superintendent, who is chosen by the Legislature in the same manner as the Regents, and who has a large corps of subordinates, and himself has manifold duties: the general superintendence of the public schools, normal schools, Indian schools, teachers' institutes, district school libraries, the apportionment and distribution of school moneys, teachers' examina-

tions, the hearing and decision of appeals on school interests, and the enforcement of the compulsory education law. He is an *ex officio* member of boards, trusteeships and committees in the State's interests. About \$5,000,000 in school moneys are under his management, and nearly 12,000 schools.

Each department has a large force of subordinates, and in some instances, as in examination and inspection, there is duplication of labors. The point of direct collision is over the high schools; these schools (now numbering 523) have grown up and multiplied under the Regents fostering care, and by their number and importance have attracted the attention and stimulated the desire of control by the Department of Public Instruction. Out of this difference has arisen a new plan of legislation, which is fathered by Senator Horace White, and was formulated by Statutory Revision Commissioner Charles Z. Lincoln, which has the favor of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Charles R. Skinner, and is opposed by the Regents.

The Board of Regents, constituting the University of the State, was created by statute in 1784, and by Constitutional Convention action in 1894 was embodied in the fundamental law. It is recognized as a corporation, under the name of the University of the State of New York, whose number (of Regents) shall not be less than nine, and whose appointment and powers shall be under legislative action. The original formation of the University was on distinctly American ideas, in the shaping of which the Old World experiences were utilized to the utmost. The system was American and the outgrowth of progressive conditions in this land.       \*       \*       \*       \*       \*       \*       \*

The public schools, at first under the superviston of the Regents, gradually, in the course of time, from the organization of a common school system of 1812, came to be ranged first under the Secretary of State, whose deputy was superintendent of common schools, until, in 1854, the Department of Public Instruction was organized under law, and since has been independent of the Board of Regents. The common schools became free schools in 1867. The Superintendent is *ex officio* a member of the Board of Regents, in order that he may be in touch with that body.

There has been entertained for several years the purpose of the unification of the two departments of the State educational system. This should have been accomplished by the Constitutional Convention; but the good intention was frustrated by those in the educational service having a personal interest in the continuance of the dual organization. It was a distinctive gain when the University of the State was put in the new constitution. It gives the starting-point for unification,



in the constitutional recognition (which should not and can not be ignored), and the University, as thus constituted, becomes the nucleus of the desired unification of the State's educational supervision. The White bill ignores this favorable condition; it has no purpose of unification; but on the contrary, proposes to reduce the powers and functions of the Regents, and on abolishing the Department of Public Instruction, places its powers in a new body under a Commissioner of Education, and gives this Commissioner powers and duties taken from the University. The effect would be, were this bill to be enacted into law, to postpone unification indefinitely, to create a batch of new and high-salaried officials, and to humiliate and reduce to insignificance the University and its Regents. The bill, evidently in spirit at least, conflicts with the constitutional provision creating the University and recognizing the Regents; it would install a more diffuse and expensive educational system; it would transfer the high schools from the University, under which they have grown into importance and usefulness, to the new supervision, without any gain or improvement; and instead of unifying or harmonizing or systematizing the State's educational plan, it would inevitably operate in the opposite direction.

The Regents never have been a political body. Political considerations do not enter into the University plan. The new scheme is liable to develop into a political machine, and indeed, it is asserted, such has been the tendency of the Department of Public Instruction under several of its Superintendents.

### **This Bill is Revolutionary**

[NEW YORK MAIL AND EXPRESS, April 10, 1899]

As early as 1784 our State united the academies, colleges and universities of the State under the title of the University of the State of New York, and created the State Board of Regents, who were invested with the care and supervision of all the institutions of higher education in the State. The Board of Regents is formally recognized by the constitution. The men who compose it (with the exception of four ex officio members) are elected by the Legislature for a life term. They are not politicians. They work without pay. At great sacrifice of private interests these nineteen gentlemen, selected by the people's representatives with reference to their peculiar qualifications as trustees of so important and delicate a trust, are devoting earnest and faithful service to the development and unification of the State's system of higher education.

So admirable is the organization of the Board of Regents and so symmetrical its plan of work that the State University is to-day probably the most representative and harmonious institution of public instruction in any State of the Union. Fifty-five degree-conferring institutions, all the academies of the State and 523 high schools, report annually to the Board of Regents, and are under their inspection and control, and among the academies and high schools are apportioned by the Regents the funds annually appropriated for that purpose. The system of examinations which has been established by the Regents, and which is known by their name, not only sets a uniform standard of scholastic attainment throughout the academies and high schools of the State, but serves to protect the professions, as well as the universities, from the admission of unworthy members. The whole system of higher education in New York is, in fact, the admiration and the model of the best trained educators of other States who have examined its carefully adjusted workings.

This system, however, is sought to be overthrown by a bill, known in the Senate as the "White education bill," which in some of its provisions is so unjust, so violent and so revolutionary that we can not see how a Senate committee could tolerate it, much less report it, as seems to have been done. The bill is reactionary and deplorably retrogressive. It wipes out the State Department of Public Instruction, the Superintendent and deputy of which now receive together \$9000, and provides for a Commissioner of Education at a salary of \$7000, one deputy at \$6000, and three more at \$5000 each, or \$28,000 in all, more than three times the present expenses of administration. The method of appointment provided for would inevitably make the incumbents politicians, and the whole field of public education a stamping ground for spoilsmen. As the Board of Regents say in their dignified, yet scathing protest, published in another column:

It would make the department of education liable to the abuses of political mismanagement and of partisan error and evil which have more than once in other fields involved our State in scandal and our people in difficulty and disgrace; it would bring, far more than at present, our system of common school instruction within the play and purview of politics and within the methods and schemes of professional politicians; it would aggrandize powers in the Commissioner and in his deputies which no educator should approve, no statesman sanction and no friend of upright or scientific government contemplate without indignation and alarm. By needless multiplication of high-salaried officials and by duplication of administrative machinery, it would unwarrantably add to the burdens of taxpayers.

A still more indefensible feature of the White bill is that it proposes to remove from the care of the Regents the 523 high schools of the State, which have been the peculiar care and are the special pride of the University Regents. It expatriates them entirely, depriving them of their long-enjoyed and cherished right of membership in the university, and excluding them from the privileges and immunities incident thereto. It cuts them adrift from the fostering care of the Regents who brought them into being, and commits them to an alien and hitherto often unfriendly guardianship.

The civilian members of the Board of Regents last week approved with perfect unanimity the vigorous protest published in another column. The State Superintendent of Public Instruction voted alone to approve the White bill. Outside of the officials of the Department of Public Instruction, possibly not entirely disinterested, there is no public demand for such revolutionary legislation.

In the closing weeks of the Legislature, this legislative tome of sixty-two pages, containing, among many others, the violent changes we have noted, is thrown on the desks of the Senators. Can the Senate afford, in the face of the protest of the Board of Regents and of every true friend of higher education in the State, to overthrow an honored system which time and experience have amply vindicated, and, at an enormous expense to taxpayers, throw the jewel of our model educational system into the arena of partisan politics, to become the football of selfish office-seekers in whatever party may be in control of the State—which will not always be, let the majority at Albany remember, the party now in charge of the state government.

This legislative monstrosity is a special order in the senate tomorrow, and we confidently look for its defeat, thus saving the governor the trouble of vetoing it.

### **An Unsound Measure**

[NEW YORK MAIL AND EXPRESS, April 12, 1899]

The Superintendent of Public Instruction is elected by the Legislature every three years. The White bill proposes that he shall be appointed by the Governor for a term of six years. It proposes to take from the Board of Regents the control and management of the 523 high schools of the State and turn them over to the new Commissioner of Education. Such a system would inevitably cram the department of education full of politics. The commissionership and deputy commissionerships, and all the subordinate officials, would become scrambling points of political strife, whichever party should be or should come in power. In the selection of the principals of these 523 high schools

there would enter the same petty bickering and political log-rolling which has often come pretty close to a scandal in the various normal schools of this State.

The State Board of Regents, however, who have built up the high school system of the State to such a degree of perfection that it has become a model for other States, are not a political body. They are elected by the Legislature for life and receive no salary except their bare expenses while in the performance of their often arduous duties. They have no interest at stake except their own good reputations and the promotion of higher education in the State of New York. Why, then, should these 523 high schools, which are the especial pride of the State University, and which in turn prize and cherish their intimate connection with it, and the substantial benefits which flow therefrom, be severed from their parent, and be thrown into the arena of partisan politics?

## THE WHITE EDUCATIONAL BILL

### Why in its present form it should not be passed

[NEW YORK TRIBUNE, April 18, 1899]

Whatever merits the White educational bill now before the Legislature may have originally possessed, it ought not to be passed in its present form. The most important amendment, and the one which should prevent its passage during the last days of the session, takes from the Regents of the State University that measure of authority over the high schools of the State which they now exercise and confers the entire supervision and control of that branch of the State's educational system upon a State Department of Education created by the bill to replace the existing Department of Public Instruction. This proposed change of name is not a vital matter, nor are the objections to an enlarged establishment of the first importance, but the endeavor to remove the high schools from the care of the Regents, by whom they have been so prudently and devotedly served, without any adequate discussion of the question or any general demand for such a change, ought to fail.

The dual system of public school administration which prevails in this State has been justly condemned, and the force of the argument against it is not seriously impaired by the contention that it has not done so much harm as it might have done or may do hereafter. The administration of the schools ought to be unified, and the proper way to do that as the Constitutional Convention of 1894 was strongly urged to declare, is to vest the appointment of the Superintendent of Public

Instruction in the Board of Regents, thus taking the educational branch of the State government entirely out of politics. The Convention did not see fit to make that change in the organic law, and subsequent Legislatures have done nothing to repair the defect. There is no possibility that any step will be taken in that direction at this session, but it is to be hoped that the Legislature will not be persuaded to take a step in the opposite direction. The proposed bill would tend not to the destruction but to the perpetuation of the dual system, and instead of diminishing would increase the inclination and the opportunities for political manipulation of the schools.

It is not necessary to disparage the character and motives of those who are most eagerly supporting this proposition. It is, or ought to be, sufficient to say that there is nothing in the bill which warrants a belief that it would produce important benefits of any sort, while it would almost inevitably foster some of the worst evils of the present arrangement.

### Educational Interests

[SYRACUSE HERALD, April 19, 1899]

It is known that Governor Roosevelt would like to see, what the members of the Board of Regents would welcome, viz, legislation that would truly unify the educational systems of the State. \* \* \*

There is no purpose of unification of the school departments in the White bill. This bill makes a new department from the public instruction department and certain interests of the Regents; but it will no nearer approach unification than does the existing arrangement. It will rather alienate the two departments, and thus postpone unification. It actually begins at the wrong end to facilitate unification. The right end is in the constitutional provision, which recognizes the Regents, otherwise the University, as the head of the State's educational system. The real object of the bill is to get around the constitution, and by creating a Commissioner, in place of the Superintendent, elevate the primary education over and above and place it in control of secondary education. It is simply "putting the cart before the horse."

The Regents, as a body, oppose the White bill for excellent reasons, which they have set forth to the people and the legislators. They demonstrate that the bill is unnecessary, unjust, wrong in principle and in purpose; that unification is not its purpose, but instead, separation and disintegration; that it is not in any respect a commendable plan, and that it can not work to the advantage of the cause of education. The Regents favor unification, and ask that this be accomplished

at the earliest practicable day. No Regent stands in the way of a thorough plan of unification, but all will do anything in their power to further it. The Superintendent and officers of the Department of Public Instruction approve and advocate the bill; why, is palpable on the face of the matter; 1st, because the Regents are to be deprived of the high schools, which that department has contended for for years; and secondly, that the place-holders in that department are to have offices of longer terms and higher salaries than those they are to give up. They complain of the Regents for reaching out for new schools to bring into their system, when the fact is that the Public Instruction Department is the only one that has so reached out, with the 523 high schools as the objects of acquisition.

In the Constitutional Convention of 1894, the question of the unification of the educational interests was pretty thoroughly considered. There should have been a final settlement then. But the Convention was not an especially able body of men, and in some respects its work was but half done. This was true of the educational action. The common schools were put in the constitution, but only as an obligation to be sustained by the people. The University of the State, under the Regents, was recognized definitely as a corporation of long standing and usefulness, to be continued. Had the provisions gone a step further, as ex-Superintendent of Public Instruction Andrew S. Draper, now president of the University of Illinois, went before the committee of the Convention and cogently urged, to the effect that unification should be consummated under the Regents, with the Department of Public Instruction merged in the University, and its Superintendent appointed by the Regents, there would have been a finality of the subject, and the cheap and selfish men and interests who are attempting to reverse the good work done by the Convention would now have no occupation. The report of the educational committee of the Constitutional Convention on this subject was able and seasonable. It pointed to the long existence of the Board of Regents, much beyond that of any other board or commission in the State, its uniform high standing, its more than a century of excellent service, without salary or other compensation other than the satisfaction of well-doing, and the really great results of the Regents' system and work in the educational affairs of the State and the large influence exercised by them over the educational progress of the country. When newspapers, like a local contemporary, reflect upon the interest and activity of the Regents in their official relations—falsely stating that it is with difficulty that meetings are gotten together, and that little regard is paid to the matters that should have their attention—it is charitably felt that the writers of these

slanders are misinformed by those who falsify the facts for some purpose and have not the enterprise to ascertain the truth. The facts are; that the Regents are thoroughly faithful to their official duties, that frequent meetings, well attended, are held during the year, besides the annual and quarterly meetings, and the individual Regents are well informed and closely attentive to the manifold concerns and affairs that constantly come before that body. The system, and the work done under it, challenge the public attention and the fullest inquiry. A knowledge of what is done by the Regents would put a new phase upon the public opinion to their disparagement, which has been created by diligent misrepresentation for no worthy purpose. The legislators, before finally acting upon the ill-contrived and mischievous bill before them, should take pains to inform themselves in respect to the present educational system and its operation, and the actual work accomplished by the departments. Such an inquiry should lead up to the taking of time for the formulation of a really needed and thorough plan of unification of the State's educational machinery.

### Action of Representatives of Academic Principals

#### FELLOW PRINCIPALS:

The White bill, which would revolutionize the educational system of the State, is being pressed to final passage in the Legislature. This bill transfers the high schools to a new department, with grave danger that these schools for the first time in their history will be brought into partisan politics. The advocates of this measure claim that this bill has been under discussion for two years, and that a majority of the high school principals favor the transfer. *If you wish to disabuse their minds of this latter supposition, you should communicate at once with the Governor and with your representatives in the Legislature.*

To say that those interested in education have had an opportunity to consider this bill is disingenuous, for the new features, introduced with the several hundred amendments first printed in April, change its entire character.

This bill leads directly away from the unification which all educators desire. It creates a new department of education, but it re-enacts the University laws, and then exempts Cornell from the provisions that apply to all other colleges and universities in the state, thus increasing the confusion that arises from divided responsibility and control.

The White bill will increase greatly the cost of administering the school system of the State, paralleling still further examinations, inspection, apportionment and reports. It may bring about a change



in the policy of the State toward the maintenance of secondary schools. At all events, *we have a right to demand that a bill which touches our interests so closely should not be passed without careful consideration.*

Up to the present time our high schools have been free from political influence. Under the provisions of the White bill we feel sure that this would not long be the case.

Fraternally yours,

JOHN G. ALLEN                      D. C. FARR

J. C. NORRIS                      C. T. R. SMITH

*Committee on legislation of the Associated  
Principals of New York State*

## White Educational Bill

[BROOKLYN DAILY EAGLE, April 18, 1899]

*The Eagle* republishes to-day the leading editorial in the *Tribune* and a letter from a prominent educator on the White educational bill. The bill takes its name from the Syracuse Senator who introduced it. It is a measure which should not pass in its present form. The *Tribune* gives reasons why it should not—and there are others.

These others range from the personal purpose behind the measure to the confusion it would work if it were adopted. The measure is the offspring of some politicians who see the end of their present service approaching, and of others who desire to get service which has been denied to them for public and party cause. Both those who would hold on and those who would catch on have united to make places for themselves under the bill, in case it becomes a law. This personal motive may not be illegitimate. It is certainly not lofty. \* \* \*

Of course there is a pretext for the bill. Its pretext is the division of State-supported schools from State-aided schools, to place the former under the "State Commissioner of Education," and to keep the latter under the Board of Regents. The common schools from primary to grammar schools are now under the Superintendent of Public Instruction. The high schools and academies, as well as the colleges, are now under the Board of Regents as to all their scholastic features, but the high schools bear a relation of support by local taxation to the Department of Public Instruction. The scheme of the bill is to take the high schools wholly from under the Board of Regents—and to create five giant offices with great powers to accomplish that object. The offices are to be created by politicians and for politicians. A result would be to make the high schools a tender to whichever State machine was in power.

The late Constitutional Convention favored the unification of the educational system of the State. It anchored the Board of Regents in the constitution and left merging of the State Department of Public Instruction with that Board to the law-making power. The Governor is in favor of that unification and of that merger. He has said so officially and publicly. He has suggested legislation to that effect. He has suggested the change of the White bill for a measure to that effect. He ought to count for considerable in legislation. As he has said: "I may not be able to secure good legislation. I can prevent bad legislation, for then my say begins."

There ought to be unification of the educational system of the State. Unification is the order of the day. It is science, business, reform and responsibility in one. The dual system of the State produces confusion, expense and collision. It begets just such grab schemes as this White bill is. Passage of that bill would indefinitely postpone unification. It would grievously injure the rights and interests of the high schools. It would put back the hands of progress on the dial of time in this State. The State University system of New York is the admiration of every American and European State. It was organized in 1784. As administered by the Board of Regents that system has been kept out of politics. The public school system has not been kept out of politics. It will not be until the Department of Public Instruction has been merged in the Board of Regents—thus unifying the educational system of the State.

The *Eagle* believes that Governor Roosevelt will prevent the spoliation of the high schools by politicians and for politicians. It believes that he will contend that all the schools should be taken out of politics instead of more of them put in politics. He may not be able to have the first done, but he can, we think, prevent the second from being done.

\* \* \* \* \*

## The White Educational Bill

[NEW YORK TIMES, April 20, 1899]

The fundamental criticism of the bill to create a Department of Education with a Commissioner at the head, in place of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, is that in transferring to this Commissioner the functions of supervision and control of the high schools now exercised by the Board of Regents, it makes a move in the wrong direction. The Superintendent now has the supervision, inspection and control of primary education, the common schools; the Regents of secondary education, the high schools. There is great force in the argument that

the educational system would be bettered by bringing both primary and secondary schools under one control. But many of the wisest friends of the schools would accomplish this concentration of authority by putting the common schools under the control of the Regents, not by handing over the high schools to the Superintendent, who is now an officer chosen in a partisan manner for political reasons, nor to the new Commissioner, who will be appointed by the Governor.

This bill would work a revolution in the administration of the system of secondary education, so long most usefully supervised, and step by step elevated, by the Regents of the University. The new proposition is to take them away from their mother department and turn them over to the Department of Public Instruction, at the same time baptizing that department anew with the name of the State Department of Education, but in no substantial particular changing its fundamental characteristics, which never can be entirely satisfactory while it remains, as it would in greater degree in the proposed new form, subject more or less to partisan domination.

On the other hand, the Regents of the University, by reason of the method of their constitution, their high personal character, the permanence of their tenures, and the fact that their services are gratuitous—uncompensated except by the gratification of being useful—may with confidence be relied upon to maintain the long, unbroken traditions of their organization for independent and intelligent action, animated solely by the sincere wish to promote the highest welfare of our schools.

Instead of withdrawing the Regents from any part of their hitherto allotted public service, it would be wiser to make them the responsible, discretionary head of the entire educational system of the State, unifying it by making the Superintendent of Public Instruction their lieutenant by committing to them his selection and appointment. His usefulness would be thereby greatly increased, for he could with singleness of thought devote himself entirely to his legitimate educational duties, freed from partisan political importunities or control, and would be assured of permanence of tenure so long as his work should maintain a proper high grade of efficiency. Under present conditions, no matter how perfect his work, a change of political control in the State is almost sure to turn out of office a Superintendent of Public Instruction and replace him by a new and untried man—with resulting dismissal of experienced subordinates.

## THE WHITE EDUCATIONAL BILL

### Some light upon a dark subject

[NEW YORK SUN, April 19, 1899]

To the Editor of the *Sun*:

SIR: The measure known as the White educational bill has traveled only a little way on its passage through the Legislature, but it has traveled plenty far enough. It is a meddlesome, impracticable and thoroughly vicious piece of proposed legislation, and it deserves defeat. There is little doubt that it will be defeated, but its condemnation should be a vigorous one.

It is admitted by all who are familiar with the present educational system of our State that it is a complicated one, suffering in a general way from divided authority, and in need of some process of unification. The question of amending and bettering it is, however, a very large one. The interests involved are widespread and delicate. All of these interests ought to be consulted and studied, and when the time comes for a wise codification of our educational statutes, a bill which is the product of serious investigation and mature thought will be the proper way to accomplish what is desired. \* \* \*

Senator White's educational bill provides that the present Department of Public Instruction shall cease to exist on July 1, and that a State Commissioner of Education, to be appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate, shall be named within twenty days after the passage of the act. The new Commissioner is to receive a salary of \$7,000, instead of a salary of \$5,000, allotted to the present Superintendent, and is to have the power of appointing and removing at pleasure one deputy at \$6,000, and three deputies at \$5,000 each, as also all needed directors of departments and other officers and employees. It is naively stated by the advocates of the bill, first among whom is Mr Charles R. Skinner, the present Superintendent of Public Instruction, that the primary advantages of all this are the merits of a better tenure of office than the present one of three years and of a better method of appointment than the present degrading logrolling in joint ballots of two houses of the Legislature. Mr Skinner puts himself before the public in the very laudable and self-sacrificing attitude of legislating himself out of existence for the good of the public service. Of course it has not occurred to him as it has, however, emphatically occurred to many of his warm personal friends, that if the bill passes he will be the most likely candidate for the new Commissionership of Education and will hold office until 1905 rather than until 1901, as under the present arrangement, with a very much larger salary than he gets now,

and with enormous powers of patronage. Even if Mr Skinner only gets the deputy commissionership in the shake-up he will be very much better off than he is now. The new Commissioner of Education is to have all the present power of the State Superintendent and is to control all the high schools and academic departments which are now under the supervision of the Regents of the University. Five hundred and more of these schools will no longer have representation in the University convocation, which has been a matter of so much pride to them in the past, and will have none of the privileges which they have heretofore enjoyed because of their University connection. Power to establish and conduct examinations and give certificates for admissions to colleges is vested in the new department, which power is also given to the Regents of the University and is at present actually exercised by the latter.

Another provision of the bill which is so extraordinary as to seem almost incredible is a clause which exempts Cornell University from all provisions in article 21 of the act, and as that article is simply a codification of all the laws of the State now regulating and controlling colleges and universities, the effect of the clause is to exempt Cornell University from the operation of all the present regulations of the statutes. Other clauses in the bill give to Cornell University the same power and dignity as representing the State that the Regents have now in issuing credentials and diplomas, and make Cornell University, in fact, more powerful than either the University or the new State Department of Education. It is impossible that any true friend of Cornell could have asked for such astounding powers and exemptions, and these provisions of the act are obviously the work of some would-be friend, gone mad.

Apart from the private and self-interested motives which a mere glance suffices to show are impudently and scandalously at work in this bill, the measure intensifies rather than lessens the present dual educational system which it purports to remedy. Both University and Commissioner still exist under the new system with very largely the same powers. The provision increasing the salary of the head of the educational department and creating new assistants to him, also at much larger salaries, is a piece of outrageous extravagance; while the power given to the Commissioner to appoint and remove at his pleasure all the heads of departments and all the employees under him and to fix their compensation as he chooses, is a reckless and semi-criminal creation of irresponsibility, which can only result in mismanagement and scandal, and could only have been intended for the purposes of a political machine.

## THE WHITE EDUCATIONAL BILL

### Said to be a blow at the High Schools of the State

[NEW YORK TRIBUNE, April 20, 1899]

To the Editor of the *Tribune*

SIR: The more the White education bill, in its later changed form, is considered, the more apparent it becomes that the recent wholesale amendments thereto are mainly in furtherance of the interests of the Department of Public Instruction, which seeks to aggrandize itself by wresting the control of the high schools of the State from the encouraging and elevating supervision of the Regents of the University. The high schools have not asked for any such change in their guardianship, nor can it in any way conduce to their welfare.

The proposed change of name of the Department of Public Instruction to that of State Department of Education, and a similar change of the title of its chief from Superintendent to Commissioner, signify nothing, except possible obscuring of the essentially selfish purpose sought to be subserved, which it is strange that some very good men fail clearly to see.

One of Supt. Skinner's claims has been that he should have the control of the high schools, because they are supported by public money. But why for that reason? Obviously the plea is fallacious. The Regents of the University are public State officers, equally with the Superintendent, elected in the same way—by the Legislature in joint session—and equally for a public service.

No thoughtful, unbiased person will believe that the Department of Public Instruction, or the essentially same department—under whatever baptism of new name—or any public educational department constituted otherwise than most happily is the Board of Regents of the University, can be kept as free from political domination as the Regents conspicuously have been throughout their entire existence of over a hundred years. And no blight more baneful could fall upon our now most excellent high schools than to have them become the subjects of partisan political strife for their control and exploiting.

They are well off where they are. Let them alone! And tamper not with the method of constituting the Board of Regents of the University. A system well tested and hallowed by the trials and experience of a century, from which naught of evil has come and which has evolved so much of public good, should be speeded on in its beneficent work, and not be threatened with or hampered by idly conceived and immaturely considered alterations, however superficially attractive.

*Syracuse, N. Y., April 18, 1899.*

M.

## A Bill to Degrade the Schools

[NEW YORK TRIBUNE, April 25, 1899]

Recent changes to which we have called public attention have strengthened the opposition to the White educational bill now before the Legislature. The latest amendment, devised by Senator Brown and accepted by Senator White, ought to kill it outright.

Without the Brown amendment, the bill, in brief, provides that the Department of Public Instruction shall be converted into a Department of Education, with a Commissioner appointed by the Governor for six years at the head of it, and that the inspection, supervision and control of the high schools of the State, now shared by the Board of Regents, shall be wholly vested in the new department. The plea is that by this means various evils resulting from the dual administration of the public school system would be rectified, but we cannot for a moment admit the validity of the argument. On the contrary, it appears to us certain that the proposed change would emphasize and tend strongly to perpetuate the division of authority of which just complaint is made, and the mischief arising therefrom. The thing to aim at is a complete unification of the educational establishment under conditions which will fully and permanently protect it from political influences. The Constitutional Convention was urged to secure that object by giving the appointment of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to the Board of Regents, whose composition and history for more than a century afford an ample guarantee of its independence and non-partisanship; but the Convention chose to regard this matter as in the proper field of legislation. It is to be regretted that successive Legislatures have failed to apply so simple, logical and effective a remedy, but it would be far more deplorable if a step backward should now be taken, and acknowledged defects fastened upon the public-school system, perhaps for many years to come.

So much for the Educational bill as it was last week. It was bad enough then, but the extraordinary amendment framed by Mr Brown makes it far worse. Mr Brown proposes that vacancies occurring hereafter by reason of death or otherwise in the Board of Regents, as at present constituted, shall not be filled; that a Regent shall be elected by the people in each of the eight judicial districts of the State, to serve fourteen years, and that the first Commissioner of Education shall be appointed by the Governor, but that his successors shall be chosen by the eight judicial district regents and the Governor, these nine constituting an elective body for that purpose after the first six years, and ultimately becoming the whole board.



It may be said that Senator Brown, who advocated a similar scheme before the Constitutional Convention, of which he was a member, is creditably frank in explaining his intentions. He is extremely solicitous that the city of New York shall never control the school system of the State, and he reckons that under his plan it never could, five of the judicial districts being securely Republican. But Mr Brown's candor does not justify his scheme for a deliberate reconstruction of the educational establishment on a political basis. Moreover, he appears with amazing fatuity to overlook the virtual certainty that the Democrats at the very first chance would knock his arrangement to pieces and rebuild it to suit themselves.

There is good reason to believe that the White bill, without the Brown amendment, would considerably increase the opportunities for political manipulation of the educational department. With the Brown amendment, it would inevitably fill the department chock full of politics. The result would be such a miserable degradation of the schools as all their intelligent friends must pray that they may escape.

### A Good Piece of Work

[NEW YORK MAIL AND EXPRESS, April 25, 1899]

The defeat of the White educational bill, the grave defects in which have been shown from time to time in *The Mail and Express*, was assured in the Senate last night, when the enacting clause of the pernicious measure was stricken out. At a meeting yesterday of the Board of Regents, of which the Governor is *ex officio* a member, all agreed that the measure was an intolerable one, and this expression was sufficient to array a majority of Senators against the bill.

The frank talk of Regent Roosevelt indicated very clearly not only that the present bill could not become a law, but that no other bill intended to make the State's educational system the football of politics will be introduced while he is Governor. He declared that the work of education should be entirely divorced from politics, and that the Board of Regents should itself be the appointing and governing power. He vigorously opposed Senator Brown's amendment, which provided for the popular election of Regents by judicial districts, and suggested their appointment by the Governor instead of their election as now by the Legislature. He declared in favor of the unification of the educational system of the State under the Board of Regents, instead of its further division, as proposed by the White bill. Finally, the Governor protested energetically against the bald favoritism and wholesale exemptions in the White bill, which, if they had been enacted, would have

made Cornell University the Gerry society among the New York institutions of learning.

The systematic and intelligent opposition of the Board of Regents, aided greatly by the press of the State, has been the effective cause of the abandonment of this bold attempt to overthrow a system which the experience of over a century has sanctioned. Yet to the Regents, holding their honorable positions by a life tenure, and receiving no compensation for their often arduous services, cannot be attributed any motive except to guard at every point the interests of education in the State of New York. In fact, at their meeting yesterday, the Regents expressed their readiness to co-operate in framing for the next legislature "any well-considered law which will secure unification of the educational system of the State, and its preservation from political interference and intrigue "

The Senate did a good day's work yesterday in defeating, probably for all time, a bill so fraught with danger to our educational system.

### Unity in the Educational System

[NEW YORK TIMES, April 26, 1899]

The contest over the White Educational bill has had a fortunate issue. The bill has been killed, which is the first thing to be thankful for. But as a result of the discussion Gov. Roosevelt and the Regents of the University have come to an understanding, and from their union of purpose a sounder and more maturely considered project of educational reform may be expected from the next session.

The fault of the White bill, as we pointed out last week, was that its tendency was to bring the schools of the State under political control. The transfer of the control of the high schools from the Regents to a Commissioner of Education appointed by the Governor, would unify the system, to be sure, but in the wrong way. The proper and sound way to get rid of the dual system of control, the Superintendent having supervision of the common schools and the Regents of the secondary, or high schools, would be to make the Superintendent an officer of the Board of Regents, appointed by them and subject to their direction. Some of the friends of a betterment of the educational system too readily abandoned this ideal solution as not to be hoped for from the Legislature, and so gave their support to the White bill.

The Governor has now assured the Regents that he favors a change of the law to give them the power of appointing the executive head of the department. The school system, primary and secondary, as well

as the collegiate, to the extent that State supervision is exercised over the higher institutions of learning, would then be under one control, and that is a reform much to be desired. But it will doubtless be found desirable to institute some reforms in the board itself. Governor Roosevelt told the Regents at their meeting on Monday, that in order to bring the board into closer touch with modern educational ideas it might be well to fix a retiring age for Regents. Upon one point the Governor spoke with strong emphasis. He assured the board that he should strenuously oppose the introduction of politics or political considerations in any part of the school system. The Regents on their part passed resolutions pledging themselves to an earnest effort to come to an agreement with the Senate committee on education and the Superintendent upon a bill for the unification of the department to be submitted to the next Legislature.

The need of well-considered legislation is illustrated by the vicious attempt of the author of the Brown amendment to put the whole system at once into the strifes of politics by proposing that the Regents should be elected by the voters in the judicial districts. He was candid enough to confess that his purpose was to secure a perpetual Republican majority in the board. This amendment died with the bill itself, but until a wise reform measure has been adopted the schools will not be secure against political assault. The outcome of the present session is satisfactory in that no evil has been done. Next winter, with the help of the Governor, a good bill ought to be got through.

### **White-Brown Bill Killed**

[BROOKLYN DAILY EAGLE, April 25, 1899]

The letter from Albany, on the White-Brown educational bill, in to-day's *Eagle*, describes the meeting of the Board of Regents on Monday and the killing of the measure by the State Senate that night. In the meeting of the board, the addresses of Mr Depew and of Governor Roosevelt, which are indicatively set forth in the letter, contained good words for education and fortunate and needed words for the Republican party. The telegram which Regent Whitelaw Reid took pains to send from as far away as Milbrae, in California, condemned the measure in even more severe terms than those employed by Messrs Depew and Roosevelt.

Stress is laid here on the Republicanism of these men, because the bill of Senator White, with the amendments by Senator Brown, for the popular election of regents, in judicial districts, avowedly signified the resolution of Republican politicians to seize and, if might be, to hold the

educational system of the State for the political purposes of their party—for the adequate reason that they felt they had the power to do so, and for the hunger reason that they felt like doing it. Monday opened with the most formidable indictment against a political party for a long time presented in this State. Monday closed with the denunciation by prominent Republicans of such a fell purpose. But, in part, the indictment still remains, for the bill was killed in the senate by Democratic votes, aided by a few Republicans against the protest of many of the latter party.

The *Eagle* was the first newspaper to open against this measure. It has kept warring against it from the first. The *Eagle* was quickly joined by the *New York Mail and Express* and the *Syracuse Herald*, and, afterwards, by the *Tribune*, the *Sun*, and other papers, which, in turn, were reinforced by the Association of the Academic Principals of the State and by the committee on legislation of the Associated Academic and High School principals of the State, as well as by letters and protests from prominent educators throughout the country. This paper opened on the measure before the Board of Regents reached its consideration. We denounced it on the 5th of April, the Board protested against it on the day following, and from then until now the best exponents of the educational interests of the State have been hostile to the measure. Their success is a cause for profound gratification. They have learned some things in this well-ended stage of a not yet ended war which will help them in the future phases of the struggle.

No one was left in doubt of the mind of the Board of Regents on the measure submitted for their opinion. The Board saw no reasons to change and saw new reasons to adhere to the position it took, when the late measure was submitted to it. It found the latest form more objectionable than prior ones were to those who would take and keep education out of politics. The plan to efface the Department of Public Instruction, without cause assigned, was explicitly condemned, unless such a step should unify the educational system of the State. The White-Brown bill added to the atrocity of the measure in its previous form the intention to deprive the Board of its power over the high schools against the protest of the high schools themselves. The insistence of those schools that they should retain their position in the honored and well-ordered higher educational policy of the State was entitled to the respect of the Senate, and received it, on Monday night.

Unification with unification left out was condemned. The proposed aggrandizement of one department, at the expense of another, was not thought to have a good defense in the mere opportunity and purpose presented to accomplish the intended robbery. Both the

Legislature and the Board practically declared the plan to elect sectional Regents, instead of State Regents, to be revolutionary, violent and monstrous. The reasons which led the late Constitutional Convention to reject that plan were virtually sustained.

The scheme was stamped out, to have the election of Regents turn on the result of partisan contests, in judicial districts, after their nomination had first turned, on the decision of partisan conventions or partisan politics in those districts. Position was taken that every Regent should have the warrant and the authority of the government of the State for his election and for his action, as now. Tribute was paid by the Senate on Monday night to the fact that in the 115 years of its existence the Board has never acted from partisan motives for partisan purposes, or under partisan dictation. The ground taken by the Governor, by the Regents and by the Senate distinctly was that no board of which the creation and control might require it to do so should be authorized by this State, in the present condition of civilization, culture and morality in the world.

Beyond question, the committee named by the Regents to confer with the Senate committee on education should be able, before the next legislature convenes, to agree upon a measure of unification that will be just to all; that will free education from political intervention or intrigue; that will save the expense and conflict of dual administration and inspection. It may, and, we think, it should, incidentally, remove any servants or factors or influences, whether in the Board of Regents or in the State Department of Public Instruction, that keep those departments at cross purposes or the Legislature ill-disposed toward either.

## WHITE-BROWN BILL KILLED

**Board of Regents and State Senate peremptorily end the measure—Work well done in a day—Meeting of the Board of Regents—Resolutions passed—Remarks by Messrs Depew and Roosevelt**

[BROOKLYN DAILY EAGLE, April 25, 1899]

The quietus given to the White educational bill by the Board of Regents and by the Legislature to-day was complete. Senator Horace White of Syracuse introduced the bill. He is chairman of the Senate committee on education. Originally the measure provided for the superseding of the Department of Public Instruction by an officer to be called Commissioner of Education, the Commissioner to be named by the Governor, subject to Senate's confirmation, to serve for six years at \$7000, to have three assistants, and to take from the Regents all the high schools now under their charge.

The Regents at a meeting on April 6 denounced the bill in the form in which it then was and issued as their own an address to the people of the state, framed by Regent St. Clair McKelway. The address has been widely published.

Seeing that the bill would be defeated, it was not pressed. Last Thursday the committee added to it amendments by Senator Elon R. Brown of the thirty-fifth district, a lawyer of Watertown, providing for a Commissioner of Education, as before, and further as follows:

The Board of Regents shall be composed of the legislative, the elective and the ex officio Regents. The Regents heretofore chosen by the Legislature, in office when this chapter takes effect, and who shall be known as legislative Regents, shall continue to hold their office during good behavior. No vacancy shall hereafter be filled in the office of legislative Regent. The Lieutenant-Governor and Secretary of State shall be ex officio Regents until December 31, 1900. The Governor shall continue to be an ex officio Regent and shall possess all the powers of an elective Regent.

At the general election in 1899, a Regent of the University shall be chosen in and for each judicial district by the electors thereof. The Regents so chosen and their successors shall be known as elective Regents. Their official term shall be fourteen years from and after the first day of January next after their election, but no person shall hold the office of elective Regent longer than until and including the last day of December next after he shall be seventy years of age. An elective Regent at the time of his election must be thirty years of age. When a vacancy shall occur otherwise than by expiration of term in the office of an elective Regent, the same shall be filled for a full term by the electors of the judicial district in which the vacancy occurs at the next general election happening not less than three months after such vacancy occurs; and until the vacancy shall be so filled, the Governor and elective Regents may fill such vacancy by appointment, which shall continue until and including the last day of December next after the election at which the vacancy shall be filled.

It was further provided that the successor of the first Commissioner of Education would in 1905 be chosen by the elective Regents only, and be removable for cause, after a hearing by them and the Governor only, the present Regents, elected for life by the Legislature, to have no successors, to have no vote in choosing or removing the State Commissioner, and in other respects being markedly discriminated against.

That was the situation when the Board of Regents reassembled on Monday. There were present Chancellor A. J. Upson, Vice Chancellor W. C. Doane, ex Officio Regents Governor Roosevelt, Secretary of State McDonough and State Superintendent of Public Instruction C. R. Skinner and Regents Martin I. Townsend, Troy; C. M. Depew, New York; C. E. Fitch, Rochester; W. H. Watson, Utica; St. Clair McKelway, Brooklyn; P. T. Sexton, Palmyra; T. Guilford Smith, Buffalo; Hamilton Harris, Albany; L. A. Stimson, New York; A. Vander Veer, Albany, and Chester S. Lord, Brooklyn.

The speeches in the Board on Monday were made in the main by Mr Depew, who led off, and by Governor Roosevelt. In the course of his remarks Mr Depew said:

In educational institutions one of their greatest elements of strength and dignity is their age, and this board is 115 years old. If the White bill passes those who study politics know that the first time the Democrats come into power, as they surely will in the natural changes, within thirty days they will amend this law so that the control of the educational departments will pass into their hands and they will make a Democratic machine.

If the Republicans now pass a law, as the State is divided, they are sure always to have a majority of the eight elective Regents. These attacks have been made on the Board of Regents at regular intervals. Governor Hill tried hard to abolish us. For twenty years I have been a trustee of Yale University. I have often attended examinations in colleges and other institutions. When my son was going to college I took pains to attend various Regents' examinations. I am bound to say that I never

in all my experience saw anything equal to them in dignity, thoroughness and impressiveness. The boys and girls from all walks of life came to their work realizing its perfect justice, and knowing that if they succeeded their credentials would bear the seal of an institution more than a century old. I have talked with many competent observers, and with the exception of an occasional educational crank I find that my high opinion of the examinations is generally shared. We must think twice before we overturn the institution which was the product of the greatest constructive statesman this or any other country has produced. Our revenue system stands to-day as he created it. The judiciary largely reflects the impress of his genius. Hamilton adopted, in constituting the Regents, the principal of the survival of the fittest. The people choose the Legislature and they in turn select the Regents. A system that has produced such results for over a century must not be lightly modified. Unification should be had by putting the whole educational system of the State under the Regents, just as the board is now.

The speech of Mr. Depew was in part intended as a reply to a statement in Monday's *Tribune* ascribed to State Senator Brown, in which he was reported as saying:

My purpose in having these Regents elected from the judicial districts is perpetually to insure that the educational system of the State shall not ever be controlled by the City of New York. New York now controls its own schools, and I do not wish it ever, through gaining possession of the Legislature, to possess power to elect a State Superintendent of Public Instruction, and thus grasp control of the school system of the rest of the State. By providing that the elective Regents shall be elected from the judicial districts there will be a certainty that the counties outside of New York will always have the naming of the State Commissioner of Education.

The brutal (and fatal) candor of Senator Brown needed the speech of Mr. Depew to save the Republican party from the charge of putting the entire system of State education into Republican politics and keeping it there. Governor Roosevelt then spoke, saying in part:

There was not the slightest chance that the White bill would pass at this session. It would be a great mistake not to secure unification. He had believed strongly from the beginning that the Regents should be the appointing power, but they must face the fact that the Legislature will not turn over the public schools to the Regents as now constituted. When he proposed this he got no support in the Legislature, and that represents fairly the outside attitude. He had no criticism to make of the work of the Regents, but was simply stating facts. For the work the Regents had done he had the greatest admiration. He was opposed to electing the Regents by the people. The Governor will appoint better men usually than the Legislature will elect. He should be glad to have the new system, if adopted, go into effect at the end of his term, as he had too many appointments to make now. He would suggest that fifteen was a better number than the present nineteen elective Regents chosen by the Legislature, and that it could be best reduced by not filling the first four vacancies that occur. He would not say, "Here we are, do anything you can," but would get those interested to sit with them and make it evident that they would concede to prejudices if necessary so that the common schools should all be put under the present Board of Regents.

If you will seriously face this problem, you can have them all put under you. Now keep the substance of your power and add to it, but yield immaterial things to prejudices.

I need not say that I am absolutely opposed to having one iota of politics in the administration of the public schools system, for you all know that I am anxious to have even the police taken out of politics. The exclusion of Cornell University from the operation of the law is absolutely unjustifiable. Instead of having two educational boards, there should be but one, and the Regents should be that one. But you ought not to say you will not break the crust of conservatism. Be willing to go into not too close touch with the waves of popular sentiment.

The Regents after further discussion adopted the following:

The Regents, reconvened to consider certain proposed amendments to the educational law, take occasion to state that their impression and interpretation of their constitutional duty is that they should carefully guard all matters touching the interests

of education in the State of New York. Created in 1784, and continued and made permanent in the constitution of 1894, they recognize the right of the Legislature of the State to increase, modify or diminish their powers. But they believe that in the discharge of their responsibilities they ought with all respect and courtesy to point out the danger to the lawmaking body whenever they conceive that the educational work of the State is liable to suffer damages. Under this conviction they have declared their opposition to certain features of the White bill now pending in the Senate.

Having said this, the Regents believe that the best disposition of a question of so grave importance would be a postponement for another year, in order that these new provisions of law may be more clearly understood, and, after public discussion by educators throughout the State, more clearly defined. But, inasmuch as the Regents have only the strong desire to accomplish two things, namely, unification and freedom from political control, it is hereby

Resolved, that the Regents declare themselves ready to favor heartily any well considered law which will secure unification of the educational system of the State and its preservation from political interferences and intrigue and to accept any change in the constitution of the Board which may become necessary in future legislation to accomplish these two objects.

Resolved, that a committee on legislation, consisting of the Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor and Regents Depew, McKelway and Sexton, confer from time to time with the members of the Senate committee on education and the Superintendent of Public Instruction with a view of agreeing upon the form of a bill to be presented to the next session of the Legislature, and having for its object the unification of the two state departments of education.

In the campaign which the Regents have made against these measures politically to spoliage education, the editorial utterances of the *Eagle*, the *Tribune*, the *Sun*, the *Times*, the *Mail and Express*, the *Syracuse Herald* and other papers have been issued in sheet, circular and pamphlet forms, and received a large circulation in the State and throughout the country. The efficiency of the work done in this respect and in others, was shown on Monday night, when the State Senate in committee of the whole voted to strike out the enacting clause of the White-Brown bill as the most effective way of killing it.

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### Extract from Letter from a Prominent Principal

“The proposed movement to free our educational system from politics ought to be carried through without fail.

“When every plan is likely to be overturned in three years, when educational officials have to court the favor of political bosses, and when a man's political belief has more power to put him in the office of Superintendent of Public Instruction than his fitness for the position, then it is time to inaugurate a different system.

“The plan to place these matters in the hands of the Regents of the University of the State of New York is the right one; for history has shown that they are working on the right line—that of elevating true education for its own sake and for the sake of the people.”



# Selections made from Editorials in Newspapers During the Constitutional Convention of 1894.

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## The Superintendent of Public Instruction

[NEW YORK TIMES, 12 August, 1894]

There is one subject with which the Constitutional Convention should deal with courage and decision, if it does anything with it, and that is the unification of the educational system of the State, by vesting the appointment of the Superintendent of Public Instruction in the Regents of the University. By thus removing the choice of the Superintendent from the field of partisan political contention it would be possible to secure the services in that office of higher-minded and more capable men and (of almost equal consequence) to retain such a man so long as his efficiency, pertinent to the duties of the office, should continue at high-water mark.

The present method of choosing Superintendents by the Legislature, once in three years, makes political considerations decide the original choice, and is sure to turn out the experienced officer at the end of his official term if the opposing political party is then in the ascendancy.

All parties should agree to take the educational system of the State out of politics. There is plenty of room elsewhere for political contention. All should unite in placing the schools of the State, from the kindergarten to the University, under the scientific supervision and unselfish care of the Regents of the University, who are high-minded men, devoting their time and services to the cause of education, asking and receiving no compensation for their labors and anxious only to promote as best may be the enlightenment and elevation of the people at large.

The Constitutional Convention can do nothing that will more widely commend its work to the people of this State, of all shades of political belief, than thus to safeguard the best interests of the public schools of all grades.

## The Convention and the Schools

[NEW YORK TRIBUNE, 12 August, 1894]

The proposal that the power and duty of appointing the Superintendent of Public Instruction in this State shall be transferred from the Legislature to the Regents of the University is supported by strong arguments. The advocates of this change, whose sincerity and disinterestedness can not possibly be suspected, have reason to hope that the Constitutional Convention will adopt their views, but since its time is limited and its work heavy, a preliminary discussion of the subject may be helpful.

All judicious supporters of the educational establishment of this State are doubtless agreed that it ought to be absolutely secured against political manipulation, and therefore that it ought, if possible, to be entirely outside the field of political contention. So far as the powers of the Regents extend, that object has been already happily accomplished. It is solely with the desire and intention of carrying out this principle still further that an extension of their powers in the way proposed is now urged. Under the existing system the choice of a Superintendent of Public Instruction is inevitably influenced by political considerations. The fact that the unfortunate possibilities of the present method of selection have hitherto been generally avoided is not a sufficient argument for its retention, if a different method would almost certainly afford a stronger guaranty of efficiency in that important office and of popular confidence in the incumbent. Those who have carefully considered the plan of vesting the appointment of the Superintendent in the Regents of the University are convinced that the change would be permanently beneficial. It is said truly that while by the conditions of their existence and organization the Regents represent both parties in the sense that they are chosen from both parties, and must continue to do so, they are nevertheless as far removed from the sway of personal or political prejudices as any official body however constituted could be; that during the whole period of their history they have never shown a desire for increased power or patronage, and that the only argument for the proposed change to which they would listen for a moment is to be found in the belief that it would enable them to serve the State by unifying and strengthening its educational system.

The Regents hold office for life without salary, and the natural expectation that officials appointed to discharge a sacred trust on those terms would cherish no other ambition than that of promoting the common welfare within their sphere has been confirmed by experience.

The people of this State have an immense interest in the educational branch of the public service, and are more and more conscious of that fact every year. They will certainly be prepared to ratify any measure for increasing the efficiency of the schools so soon as they are convinced of its merits. That the purpose of this proposal to lift the office of Superintendent entirely above the range of party strife is as sure as it is deserving of their sympathy no one can doubt, and we believe that the method suggested will commend itself to their approval, as we hope it may to the judgment of the Constitutional Convention.

### **Regents Freer from Political Entanglements**

[NIAGARA FALLS CATARACT]

Much might be said in favor of the suggested change. The Board is a more permanent body than the Legislature, is freer from political entanglements; and is in closer touch with all matters educational, dealing as it does with such subjects only. Any appointments they might make would, in their own interests, necessarily be dictated rather by a desire to secure a competent and capable man than by any desire to serve party or party ends.

### **Regents Should Appoint Superintendent**

[NEW YORK MORNING ADVERTISER, 8 August, 1894]

The movement inaugurated by the teachers of the high schools of the State to have the Superintendent of Public Instruction appointed by the Board of Regents is one that deserves encouragement and should receive the careful attention of the Constitutional Convention. The educational committee has had the matter before it for some time, but consideration of it is being too long deferred. The present method of appointment—by joint ballot of the Legislature—is one which passes this important office over to the control of politicians. The salary attached is \$5000. This is a bone worth picking, and it sets the pack to quarreling.

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### **An Educational Reform**

[HARPER'S WEEKLY, 14 July, 1894]

It is understood that a proposition to vest the election of the superintendent of Public Instruction in the Regents of the University is considered favorably by the committee on education of the New York Constitutional Convention, and will in due time be reported to that body for its action. It is auspicious, both for the character of the proposition

and the prospects of its incorporation in the organic law, that it will proceed from the committee with substantial unanimity. In the Convention it will be advocated by leading delegates of both parties, and there can be no question of its adoption and submission to the people.

Its inspiration is obvious, and that is the desire of intelligent friends of education to relieve, so far as practicable, the conduct of its various systems from political influences. There is, of course, no department of government that should be so free from partisan inclination as that of education, and yet it is to the reproach of New York, which in many respects has conserved admirably the educational interests of her people, that she has permitted too much of the evil indicated to obtain, and that specially in the management of her elementary schools. This is true of city boards, too often the creatures of ward caucuses, of county commissioners quite as often the makeshifts of convention compromises, and of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, chosen almost uniformly for his skill as a manipulator of votes rather than for his worth as an educator. That some of the officials thus evolved have become superior to the method of their production is certainly to their credit, but the method has endured with the lax or dictatorial supervision, the incompetent subordinates with credentials from local bosses, and the tendency to subordinate educational weal to political behests which it involves. A drastic reform would at once resolve the elective into the appointive scheme, with lengthened tenures and removals for cause, but this would probably be so repugnant to the democratic sentiment of the Commonwealth, fortified as it is by the generally beneficent operation of the constitution of 1846, as to render it inexpedient and impracticable, but a movement in the right direction may be made by taking the Department of Public Instruction from the domain of party politics.

There is no need to rehearse the story of how this supreme and sacred trust has been time and again abused and degraded, or how those who have held it have been fashioned by the machinery of party, and have in turn constructed machines for personal profit and partisan aggrandizement. It is a story as familiar as lamentable. The evil should be summarily remedied, and that remedy may be applied by the Convention at the request of the committee. \* \* \* \* \*

The new departure is simply as to the mode of election. The Regents are the most convenient, conservative, and serviceable agents in whom to confide such election, while still preserving the integrity and independence of public-school administration.

It is not essential in this connection to review the work which the Regents have done through the century of their being, nor to emphasize the opportunities for still larger usefulness which recent legislation has

afforded them, but it is true that their disposition, and their usages would be the assurance that through them politics would be eliminated in the selection of the Superintendent, who would be chosen in the same manner and for the same term as is the Secretary of the Board. The Regents have, indeed, been elected by the same body, viz, the Legislature, as have the Superintendent and United States Senators, but membership in the Board, with the life tenure attached to it and non-compensated service, has informed them with a dignity and a sense of responsibility inconsistent with political bias in their official action. This is in the nature of things. It commends itself *a priori*, but it is also justified historically. Some fresh illustrations are notably pertinent. Four years ago George William Curtis was unanimously elected Chancellor by a Board which was almost wholly opposed to him politically, but he was by his eminence as a scholar, and his long and distinguished career as a Regent, entitled to the distinction, which was freely bestowed. Upon his death another scholar was preferred as his successor, and William Croswell Doane, who had but a year previously been elected a Regent by a Democratic Legislature, was made Vice-Chancellor. In the selection of its secretaries and clerical force the Board has always been equally solicitous that its appointments should be significant of their educational and effective quality, and not of their political affiliations. So it would appear that the Regents may safely be trusted to choose the Superintendent, and that thus that official may be preferred by educational standards. These are the proper standards. and thus far no better nor no more rational plan has been outlined than that the Regents should enforce them.

### Regents Work and Politics

[BUFFALO EXPRESS, 24 June, 1894]

The amendment before the Constitutional Convention proposing to make the Superintendent of Public Instruction a subordinate of the Board of Regents would do away with the existing inconsistencies consequent upon a dual system of supervising education. It is difficult to see how it would injure the power or opportunities of a good Superintendent, or how, with the Board composed as it is, it would be a dangerous step for the State. If it would tend to bring the Regents, who are appointed for life, more into politics, it would not be so desirable. But with a Superintendent chosen as under present conditions, merely because he is the henchman of a boss, it will be hard to make the public believe that a change making him a subordinate would be an injury to the interests of education.

## The University of the State of New York

[NEW YORK SUN, 14 August, 1894]

Among the thousands of college graduates who are inhabitants of the Empire State there are few who could, offhand, give a correct answer to the question: What is the University of the State of New York? Yet the question is well worth answering, for under that title we possess an institution of remarkable administrative capabilities of utility which, if not absolutely unique, is only paralleled in France, and approached within a certain distance by the London University.

The history of the University of the State of New York is bound up with that of the Commonwealth, with which it is nearly coeval. Organized in 1784, it had for its first Chancellor GEORGE CLINTON, while DE WITT CLINTON was its third Secretary; and ALEXANDER HAMILTON and JOHN JAY were among its first and most active regents. The "University" is a supervisory and administrative, not a teaching, institution. It is a State department, and at the same time a federation of over five hundred institutions of higher and secondary education. Like other States, New York has a Department of Public Instruction in charge of elementary schools, but no other State has a department devoted to the interests of education higher than that which may be classed as elementary.

Considered as a State department, the "University"—we use quotation marks to distinguish it from the meaning usually attached to the term—unites various educational functions elsewhere scattered or entirely unprovided for, and exercises unusual powers. Though most of its work is executive, yet in granting charters to all educational institutions, it performs functions usually discharged only by Legislatures. On the other hand, in revoking charters and dissolving educational corporations, it exercises the judicial functions of a court. Its examination department embraces not only the functions of the local examinations of Oxford and Cambridge, and of the University of London, but also the State licensing of physicians, and other work peculiar to itself.

Its extension department corresponds to the similar departments of Oxford and Cambridge and of the London Society for the Extension of University Teaching. Its State library and State museum departments not only have custody of collections, among the most important in the United States, but also conduct work allied to that of the English science and art department of the British Museum, and of the London Natural History Museum.

Regarded as a federation, the University of the State of New York reminds one of the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, each of

which represents a union of colleges; but in respect of comprehensiveness it differs from these, because it includes all the colleges, academies and institutions for higher education within the bounds of the Commonwealth. The law gives to incorporated institutions no option as to their membership in the University. It says:

“The institutions of the University shall include all institutions of higher education (the term ‘higher’ here is construed to embrace what is generally termed secondary) which are now or may be hereafter incorporated in this State, and such other libraries, museums, or other institutions for higher education as may, in conformity with the ordinances of the Regents, after official inspection, be admitted to or incorporated by the University.”

This means that no educational establishments except those of a relatively elementary order, which fall under the authority of the Department of Public Instruction, can have a legal existence in New York without being subject to the regulations and entitled to the privileges provided by the University.

The University of the State of New York conserves the advantages of individual initiative, while extending the benefits of systems, of harmony, of co-working in the various members of the educational body, and of organic connection with State life. The organization most closely resembling it is that of the University of France, as devised by the first Napoleon in 1808, twenty-four years after that of the State of New York had been put in operation.

### Keep the Schools Undefined

[TROY PRESS, 11 August, 1894]

The Constitutional Convention, as we have previously suggested, should vest the appointment of the Superintendent of Public Instruction in the Regents of the University of the State of New York.—*New York Advertiser*.

The question of harmonizing the two departments of education in the State of New York has been one which has caused a great deal of thought on the part of leaders in educational thought in this State for several years. All sorts of suggestions have been made. Many of the practical politicians urge that the Regents of the University of the State of New York be abolished, or put under the control of the Department of Public Instruction. But this wish seems to be confined to the politicians or those who have not given the question particular attention. The true friends of education, of advanced education in this State—and we are glad to see the *Advertiser* taking a determined stand on this ground—are appreciative of the grand work accomplished by the Regents,

and are mindful of the wonderful progress made by that body in the care of the higher schools and academies during the past few years, especially since the reorganization of that institution. This phase of the question is one which has been discussed frequently in this paper and we do not propose to touch upon it here. The immediate point at issue is whether the Department of Public Instruction shall dominate.

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The stand taken by the enemies of the University is indefensible, from our standpoint. The foremost educators of Europe, repeatedly have commended the Regents for the work accomplished by the University in recent years, and the University stands to-day as the peer of any educational institution or system in the world.

For years the Department of Public Instruction was kept out of politics. The University always has been kept out of politics, and ever will be free from contamination of that character, so long as its cardinal principles remain unaltered and its executive officers continue to be anywhere near the standard of the present staff. The Department of Public Instruction, on the contrary, has been brought into politics. We do not pretend to state the whys and wherefores, but that it has been placed where it is dominated, to a certain extent, by politicians, none will attempt to refute.

It is against this domination that the friends of education in this State are defending the Regents of the University. And it is with this principle of complete autonomy on the part of the educational bureau in view that we advocate exactly what the *Advertiser* does—that the appointment of the Superintendent of Public Instruction should be vested in the Regents of the University. This would take the department entirely out of politics, and we can see no other present way in which this most desirable end is to be accomplished. Partisan politics is the bane of education wherever it obtains even partial control. Such power should be throttled wherever it manifests itself, instantly and without mercy. No branch of our public service is so close to the people as that of public education; and it is becoming more sacred year by year. Had the citizens of the State known the true status of affairs or its possibilities, the change proposed would have been effected the last previous time the constitution was revised.

The interest in the matter was never greater than now, and it is increasing. Year by year the eyes of the people are opened wider and wider, and the demand for the protection of public education from political partisanship becomes stronger and stronger. With public sentiment as it is to-day there is little room for doubt that the action of the Constitutional Convention in making the change suggested would



be emphatically endorsed by the people if they were called upon to settle the question with their votes next fall.

## Give the Regents Power to Elect the Superintendent

[Extracts from Editorial in THE OUTLOOK, 18 August, 1894]

\* \* \* If in our educational systems there is one principle more than another to be insisted upon, it is that schools should be totally dissociated from politics. The present issue in New York State has its lessons for the educational system in every other State in the Union. \* \* \*

Now as to the dual system. The Superintendent of Public Instruction, elected by a joint ballot of the Legislature, generally owes his election to political influence. The Regents controlling higher education are twenty-three in number; they are elected in the same manner as are United States Senators, and they serve without salary. The present Board is composed of the most eminent citizens of the State, and instead of enlarging the political power of the Superintendent of Public Instruction we need rather to enlarge the economical, essential, and non-partisan work of the Board of Regents. \* \* \*

The fortunes of politics affect our school officers from the Superintendent down. Instead of reforming higher education, we need rather to look at the incompetency of elementary instruction. \* \* \*

Instead of abolishing the Board of Regents, we would give them power to elect the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and would make him amenable to them. A body over which George Clinton, John Jay, George William Curtis, and Anson Judd Upson have presided would surely prove at least as desirable electors of a Superintendent as would any partisan legislature. The Regents would choose a man without the slightest regard to political affiliations, and with some regard to fitness for his work. This plan was unanimously approved at the recent meeting of the University Convocation, the most largely attended ever held, which voted to memorialize the Constitutional Convention to provide for the recognition in the constitution of the Board of Regents as a constituent part of the organic structure of the Commonwealth, and to confer upon it the power to elect the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the State.

## Unify the Educational System.

[ROME DAILY SENTINEL, 15 August, 1894.]

If the Constitutional Convention does any thing to the educational system, let it unify the office of Superintendent of Public Instruction in the Regents of the University. A critic of the subject of the State system of education well says: "Let us all unite in placing the schools of the State, from the kindergarten to the University, under the scientific supervision and unselfish care of the Regents of the University, who are high-minded men, devoting their time and services to the cause of education, asking and receiving no compensation for their labors, and anxious only to promote as best may be the enlightenment and elevation of the people at large."

The unification would be desirable if for no other reason than that of the equableness and progress guaranteed by having all affairs germane to one department, kept under that department. But the fact that the office of Superintendent of Public Instruction is political is strongly additional reason for the consolidation. Every three years the Legislature elects the Superintendent, and there is partisan contention over the office.

The political considerations likely to govern the original choice are not such as attend to secure the services of high-minded and capable men. If after three years the opposing political party is in the ascendancy, an experienced officer is sure to be turned out. And so it goes. Capacity in the first place, and the retention of the cumulative experience of the officer, the two vital principles of successful administration, cannot be obtained under the present system. Let the office cease to be a political foot-ball.

## The Regents and the Schools

[NEW YORK TIMES, 21 August, 1894]

A few days ago the *Times* pointed out the advantages that would accrue to the State by the unification of the system of public instruction by a system under which the Superintendent should be appointed by the Regents of the University.

There can be no doubt that this management is theoretically much more eligible than that which now exists, under which secondary and higher education, so far as the State has to do with it, is administered by the Board of Regents, and primary instruction by the Superintendent. The Regents are chosen by the Legislature as vacancies occur in their body, and each party makes a point of putting forward some man whom it desires to honor on account of his scholarship. As a matter

of fact, the system has worked very well indeed in securing men of high character and standing.

A real and valuable tradition has been established, and a body of men assembled the imposition upon whom of any duties pertaining to public instruction would command the public confidence beforehand. The only complaint that has ever been made about the body is that its duties are not very important. On the other hand, here is an advisory board capable of supervising and administering public instruction so as to command the public confidence. On the other, here is the desirableness, admitted by every thoughtful citizen of the State, that the public school system should be taken out of politics. What could be more obvious, and, now that a Constitutional Convention is sitting, more easy, than to symmetrize our whole system of public instruction by intrusting to the Regents the appointment of the Superintendent?

Theoretical anomalies do not much distress ordinary Americans. So long as an incongruous system worked well and was not attacked, there was no good reason why it should be changed. But the present Superintendent of Public Instruction has had the very bad judgment to call attention to the incongruity of the system and to propose that the incongruity be removed. He did this by recommending that his own office should be magnified by adding to it the functions heretofore exercised by the Regents. But, to people who consider the case, that is an impossible solution. The chances are very great that a Superintendent appointed under the present system will be a politician and will owe his place to political influence. In fact, the present Superintendent is an object-lesson as to that danger.

Even if he happened, against all the chances, to be a competent and faithful Superintendent, he would be in imminent danger of removal whenever the party opposed to his own controlled the Legislature at the expiration of his term, and the State would at once lose the benefit of his experience. If he were appointed by the Regents, his appointment would be as far removed from politics as can be expected of any State appointment. So far as we know or believe, the Board of Regents is as free from political control as any body of public servants in the State—as the Court of Appeals, for example. We do not believe that the politics of a candidate for Superintendent would cut any figure in the discussion or the consideration of his appointment by that body. We believe the election would be decided solely by what appeared to be his fitness for the place.

This would be an immense and obvious improvement over the present system. In the first place, the chances are overwhelming against the choice being decided by the unrestricted judgment of the

Legislature, or the majority of it, as to the fitness of the candidate; in the second place, the chances are overwhelmingly against the Legislature's being so good a judge as the Regents upon the fitness of a candidate for this particular place.

### **Educational Reforms.**

[From "A New Constitution for New York," in REVIEW OF REVIEWS, March, 1894.]

There is no public matter that lies in reality so close to the hearthstone of every family in New York as that of the proper provision for education, so that a wise and practical intelligence for citizenship and for self-support may be brought within the reach of the children of every household. What can this Convention do to improve the school system of New York and for education in general?

The opportunity is given to this Convention to place the entire educational system of the State, from the primary school to its colleges and universities, under a thoroughly competent and representative State authority, and to prohibit interference by the Legislature or by local officers in the sphere particularly reserved to the science of education. The Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York is a body which, although its powers have been enlarged within two years, has never yet had that opportunity of doing effective work which so representative and important a body of men should have.

### **School Reform and Improvement.**

[NEW YORK MAIL AND EXPRESS, 20 August, 1894.]

Argument ought not be necessary to fix public sentiment in favor of the reform in the educational department of the State which has been proposed to the Constitutional Convention, and probably is not.

The change proposed is that the Superintendent of Public Instruction shall be elected by the Regents of the University and be responsible to them for the faithful and competent discharge of his duties. At present the Superintendent, who is elected by the Legislature, has charge of the elementary schools, while the Regents exercise some supervision of the higher institutions.

The office of Superintendent has become a political prize. \* \* \* It is too much to expect that a Superintendent, chosen under such auspices, would be satisfactory to the real friends of the public schools. \* \* \*

The incongruity of two departments of education is admitted on all sides and it ought not to be longer tolerated in our State. The fitter should survive and control. The other should be abolished or

merged in the better one. The consolidation would provide for superintendence and take the public schools entirely out of politics.

### **The Regents and the Schools.**

[NEW YORK TRIBUNE, 23 August, 1894.]

The proposed amendment to the Constitution transferring the appointment of the Superintendent of Public Instruction from the Legislature to the Regents of the University is under consideration by the Committee on Education. Approval of this proposition has been so general as to suggest the probability of favorable action by the Convention in case the committee shall recommend the change. We hope that it will have that advantage. An open discussion of its merits is likely, we think, to be convincing to disinterested persons who may not have given much thought to the subject hitherto. Certainly the advocates of the proposal are governed only by a desire to promote the efficiency of the schools, and their argument is a strong one.

No reputable citizen of New York wants to have the selection of the Superintendent influenced in the slightest degree by political considerations. But, human nature being what it is, it is impossible under the present method of appointment to escape such influences altogether. A legislature is either Republican or Democratic, and its bias is always liable to be disclosed in the dismissal of a Superintendent who ought to be retained or the retention of a Superintendent who ought to be dismissed. Every three years the schools of the State are subjected to this danger, and the fact that they may escape it for a considerable period does not justify the risk.

The Regents constitute a permanent body, removed by the terms of its official existence as far as possible from the influence of narrow and selfish considerations. They have never asked for an extension of their powers and patronage, and have no motive for incurring a new responsibility except a laudable desire to render better service to the State which honors and trusts them. It is believed with reason, and so far as we know it is not openly disputed, that the proposed amendment would operate to unify and strengthen our educational system. That is the end, and the only end, which its supporters are seeking to accomplish.

### **The Regents should choose the Superintendent of Public Instruction**

[THE TIDINGS, 24 August, 1894]

The University of the State of New York is one of the oldest institutions of the State, having been organized in 1784, its object being the promotion of education beyond the primary branches. It is a supervisory

and administrative body and not a teaching institution. It is a federation of more than 500 institutions of higher and secondary education, suggesting, as such, the form of Oxford and Cambridge universities, made by the union of their various colleges. \* \* \*

The University is governed by a Board of Regents who are elected for life by the State Legislature and serve without pay. The Governor of the State, Lieutenant-Governor, Secretary of State and Superintendent of Public Instruction are *ex officio* Regents. The most eminent citizens of the State have served on the Board, men in every way qualified to deal with the educational interests of the State. George Clinton, the first Governor of the State of New York, was also the first Chancellor of the University of the State of New York. George William Curtis was at the time of his death Chancellor. De Witt Clinton, Alexander Hamilton and John Jay have been members of the Board. \* \* \*

It will be noted that the Regents exercise control, to a certain extent, over the higher institutions of learning, as distinguished from the primary schools; the latter being under the supervision of the Superintendent of Public Instruction who is elected by the Legislature. It is now proposed to vest the Regents with authority to choose the Superintendent, it being hoped in this way to unify the educational system of the State and to secure that position and keep it free from political taint.

The advantages of such a move are obvious. The Regents are men chosen by reason of prominence as capable men; and receiving no pay they are as a rule men actuated only by a desire to promote the public welfare, in the faithful discharge of the duties attached to their positions. In the selection of a Superintendent they will be moved to appoint one only by reason of his fitness for the office. Needless to say that fitness for the elective office is not a necessary qualification at the present time.

It is urged against this that the office is too responsible a one for its incumbent not to be directly responsible to the people; to which we say that an incompetent Superintendent, we believe, would be far more quickly disposed of by the Regents and at a far less cost to the educational interests of the State than if he were elected by the people, who after all are most often called upon simply to choose the less of two evils rather than the better of two goods.

We shall be glad to see the Regents invested with power to choose a Superintendent of Public Instruction, for we feel assured that in that event no political considerations, but fitness for the position will be the prime requisite.

## State Superintendent of Public Instruction

[UTICA PRESS, 22 August, 1894.]

The Constitutional Convention would do a service to the State by putting an end to the continual clash between the State Department of Public Instruction and the Regents of the University. As the administration of the public school system is now carried on, the Regents have control over secondary and higher education, while the Superintendent of Public Instruction directs primary education. There is no good reason why the State's control over the schools should be thus divided, and very important advantages would accrue to the State from the unification of the educational system. The present Superintendent has called the attention of the Convention to the incongruity and has suggested that it be removed. He did this by recommending that his own office should be magnified by adding to it the functions hitherto exercised by the Regents. In other words, he would bring the school system completely into politics. Apparently a better way of settling the matter would be to provide for the appointment of the Superintendent himself by the Regents.

The Regents are chosen by the Legislature for their scholarship and high character, and their positions are entirely honorary. They are as far removed from politics as any body of men can be. On the other hand, the chances are very great that a Superintendent, under the present system, will be a politician and will owe his place to political influence. Even though he happened to be a competent and faithful official, he would be in danger of removal whenever the party opposed to his own controlled the Legislature at the end of his term, and the State would lose the benefit of his experience. If the election of the Superintendent were controlled by a non-partisan body of men of the high character of the Regents, it is not probable that politics would cut much of a figure in his appointment, and his election would be more apt to be decided solely by what appeared to be his fitness for the place. The Superintendent is properly the executive officer of the department, and there are good reasons why his office should be more permanent than it is at present.

## A Chance for Improvement

[SAUGERTIES DAILY POST, 23 August, 1894.]

While the Constitutional Convention is being asked to work much needed reform in many directions, there is one change in public administration which it seems could not well be passed by.

The safety of our country is in our public schools, and the safety of our public schools is in their non-partisan administration; at present, the head office of the State Department of Public Instruction is filled by a joint ballot of our State Legislature, and the terms of office dependent on the political desires of men, many of whom are in no way qualified to select a worthy occupant for such a place.

Further, a change in the political condition of our State Legislature, coming at the proper time, cannot fail to bring about a change in the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, as it is a law of political Medes and Persians, that to the victors belong the spoils.

The question of the appointment of this highest officer of this highly important department in State affairs has long agitated the minds of educators, and those closely associated with them, but not until recently has the matter been brought so carefully to the notice of all.

The question as to in whom shall be vested the appointment of our State Superintendent of Public Instruction, has been so widely discussed in educational gatherings and by laymen in the press that there seems but one opinion. With the Regents of the University of the State of New York should rest this duty.

The reasons why are obvious; the Regents are a continuous body, chosen because of their fitness, serving without pay, and holding office until age or some other condition renders them unfit or unable to perform their duties. Therefore, as the Regents represent the highest educational interests in the State, and are not in a position to be influenced by political or any other than proper considerations it would seem highly proper and only just that the Constitutional Convention should give to the Regents, in addition to the powers which they already possess, that of electing the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. Surely such an action would meet the approval of all interested in the best and truest education of American boys and girls.

### **The Regents Should Appoint the Superintendent**

[THE OUTLOOK, 25 August, 1894]

Last week we recommended that the Constitutional Convention now in session in Albany should vest the appointment of the Superintendent of Public Instruction in the Regents of the University of the State of New York. It seems wise to further emphasize that recommendation, for the present opportunity is a welcome one for at last getting our schools out of politics. As is well known, the Legislature in joint session elects the Superintendent of Public Instruction, whose candidacy is generally the result of his labors for the party in power.



But should he be chosen in the other way, the honor would be a real one, because it would come from a continuous body, working in unbroken tradition, not for politics, but wholly for education, and hence with an expert ability to decide accurately concerning the fitness of the candidates. Furthermore, any action of the Regents would be free from constraint, both because of the life-tenure and of the non-compensation of their offices. They would not be likely to do what the Legislature is forced to do when the opposing party gains the ascendancy—namely, to replace an efficient Superintendent by a new and untried man. Under the present system, what inducement is there for a really capable man to undertake the useful labors of the Superintendent, knowing that no amount of ability or devotion will enable him to retain office against a hostile Legislature? We believe that the people of New York State will be quick to comprehend the value to them of the present opportunity, for no matters touch their lives and homes with greater directness than those of education. The action which we recommend is clearly for the advantage of their children. So far from giving to the Superintendent the power he seeks over all the educational system of New York State, let that system be unified indeed, but with the non-partisan Regents to guard its immunity from politics.

### Take the Schools out of Politics

[BROOKLYN LIFE, 25 August, 1894]

There is too much "in it;" too many fat jobs connected with our public schools to make it anything but easy to tear them from the clutches of insatiable political machines. It is for this reason that we doubt if the Constitutional Convention, with its diverse elements, will be able to pass a resolution placing the entire educational system of the State in the Regents of the State University. We believe that the attempt to do this will be made, and *Brooklyn Life* for one would be glad to have it succeed. The Regents are honorable and learned men who are selected for what they have in *them*, and not for what they can get out of *it*. The opposite may be said of those who now control this most important of all State interests.

### Educational Reform Needed.

[SOUTH SIDE OBSERVER, 24 August, 1894.]

If there is anything from which politics should be abrogated, it is the State educational system. The office of State Superintendent of Public Instruction is an appointive one. The present method is by

joint ballot of the Legislature, and it is one which passes this important office over to the control of politicians. The salary is \$5,000 a year. To politicians this bone is worth picking. Of late years the office has been very well conducted, but no one can tell how long it will continue so. There is a movement now to induce the Constitutional Convention to vest the appointment of the Superintendent in the Regents of the University of the State of New York. Such a change should manifestly be made. Many reasons may be given for it. The educational system of the State should be kept free from the contaminating influence of partisan politics. That only can be assured by taking the appointment of educational administrative officers out of the field of such political contention.

As now selected, the choice of Superintendent of Public Instruction is invariably dictated by partisan political considerations, which must naturally impose hindering constraints upon his administration of the office; and, no matter what useful expert efficiency such an official may acquire or develop in office, experience has demonstrated that he will be required to retire therefrom and give place to some new and untried man, when another political party comes into power.

Because the Regents are a continuous body, laboring constantly in the field of public education, and dealing with the subject from a scientific point of view; chosen primarily because of attained prominence as high-minded and capable men, their official experience gives them personally, and their board traditionally, an expert ability to judge more accurately concerning the natural and acquired fitness of candidates for so important an educational office as that of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

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“I submit that in States where there is a State University governed by Regents, the educational departments of the State ought to be placed under their administration and thus kept out of the political powers and free from the dangers which would entail if committed to their hands. This is one of the most decided advantages for the system in the State of New York, and is in itself strong enough to overbalance almost all other considerations.”—WILLIAM WARREN POTTER, M. D., in a paper read at the annual conference of the State medical examining and licensing boards, Milwaukee, Wis., June 7, 1893.

THE REGENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY WERE THE ORIGINATORS OF  
OUR PUBLIC COMMON SCHOOLS.

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"For the initial and the decisive step which led to a State system of elementary schools, we are primarily indebted to the Regents of the University. In their annual reports to the Legislature in 1793, 1794 and 1795 they urgently represented the necessity of State action for the organization of a general system of elementary schools. They were the foremost men in the State and they were the custodians of the educational interests of the Commonwealth. This gave them the right to speak and it gained attention to what they said. And they spoke earnestly, forcefully and effectively. What they said brought from the Legislature of 1795 the great statute whose approaching centennial anniversary has suggested this address."—[HON. ANDREW S. DRAPER, LL. D., in address at the University Convocation, Albany, N. Y., July 6, 1894.]

Later, Mr. Draper, who it will be remembered was formerly Superintendent of Public Instruction in New York State, voluntarily appeared before the committee on education in the Constitutional Convention of that year, and expressed his conviction that such officer should be elected by the Regents of the University.

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And the Regents to-day, as they ever have done, clearly recognize the supreme importance of fostering our common schools. Make the Regents responsible for that field of educational work, and the progress and improvement in the elementary schools of the State would be as marked as has been the development of the secondary schools, with whose care the Regents have been especially charged.

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Unify the educational system of the State, from the kindergarten to the highest university—make the ascent a continuous stairway from bottom to top, and set the Regents to guard its safety throughout its entire progress—and it assuredly will thus be made more fruitful of beneficent results than can be possible under other conditions.



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